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ABSTRACT

One of a series of practitioner-oriented newsletters, the document provides elementary school principals with information about school partnerships with business and industry. Based on a series of recent reports criticizing American schooling, the article recommends that schools form alliances with business and industry in teaching students, in designing curricula that prepare students for the kind of jobs that will develop, in capitalizing on advances in technology, and in generating new management techniques. Ten already existing school-business-industry partnerships are briefly described. District of Columbia Public Schools are cited as one example of a school district that has successfully enlisted the help of several hundred businesses. In addition, nine techniques for forming alliances between schools and their neighboring businesses and industries are listed. (LH)

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Business, Industry, and School Partnerships

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"Schools are not as good as they used to be, but they never were," Will Rogers wryly observed.

Presumably it was not in that same spirit that several recent studies of American education took the public schools to task:

- The National Commission on Excellence in Education said that significant and persisting declines in student achievement had put the nation "at risk." The commission went on to challenge the American people to take energetic action to reform our educational system.

- The Task Force on Education for Economic Growth said that bold and creative action was necessary in order to deal with "challenges more profound than Sputnik and as fundamental as the change from an agrarian to an industrial economy after the Civil War."

- John Goodlad, former dean of the UCLA Graduate School of Education, concluded an eight-year, \$4-million study of American public schools and warned that "the problems of schooling are of such crippling proportions that many schools may not survive," adding: "It is possible that our entire public education system is nearing collapse."

- The National Assessment of Educational Progress announced that high school students' ability to solve complicated math problems is "unacceptably low."

- John Naisbitt, in his best-selling *Megatrends*, noted that our country is increasingly based on an information economy that demands communication and technical skills, yet a 1980 National Science Foundation report states that most Americans are moving toward "virtual scientific and technological illiteracy."

That is not all the bad news. Experts estimate that in the next five years this country will need 113,500 more computer scientists and electrical engineers than our colleges can produce—in part because they can't hire enough faculty for students who want the courses.

And at least 40 states report being unable to find enough math and science teachers. Meanwhile, the National Science Teachers Association estimates that 60,000 of the country's 200,000 math and science teachers are not qualified. Industry's higher-paying jobs have lured many of the most competent math and science teachers from their classrooms.

How can the public schools respond to these challenges? Who can help? What can be done to improve student performance and restore public confidence in our schools?

Business partnerships needed

One recurring suggestion from the groups that studied American education is that schools should form alliances with business and industry. The Task Force on Education for Economic Growth said: "Specifically, we recommend that business leaders . . . work actively to establish partnerships between businesses and schools." The report went on to endorse "team teaching using teachers and specialists from industry; customized job-training efforts between businesses and schools; the training of students and teachers in the use of equipment; courses actually taught in offices and factories; business-sponsored recognition for outstanding teachers and principals; and a host of other cooperative ventures."

Everybody wins, several commentators said, when businesses and schools work together because they offer each other mutual benefits.

American businesses need a pool of potential employees with appropriate reading, writing, and computing skills to master technical aspects of entry-level jobs, who can communicate effectively, make sound judgments, and learn ever more complex tasks.

At the same time, schools need help designing curricula that prepare students for the kinds of jobs that will develop, in capitalizing on advances in technology, in generating new management techniques—precisely the kind of expertise that business can offer.

Partnerships that work

A variety of school-business-industry partnerships have been established around the country:

- The New York Yankees, Time, Inc., and four other New York City businesses fund a "Dial-a-Teacher" program in which students from 27 elementary schools are getting help with homework each afternoon by telephone.

- Chase Manhattan Bank in New York has given \$430,000 to train high school principals to become better leaders, especially in curriculum areas.

- Also in New York, the American Can Company invested \$25,000 in T-shirts, jackets, and buttons to give to Martin

Luther King, Jr., High School students who had perfect attendance. The company also gave a \$1,000 scholarship, paid for a school handbook, and sent five students and two teachers to its annual meeting in Minneapolis. Next year the corporation's annual meeting will be held at Martin Luther King.

- In Chicago, nearly 3,000 teachers in two pilot districts have received eight hours of training to give career education to their students. Businesses have assigned 70 career education coordinators to the project, and 15 career development centers have been set up. At one such center, three banks teach economics and business studies. At another, Holiday Inn employees teach motel operations. At a third, Midway Airport personnel help focus on careers in the air transportation industry.

- In Memphis, lab schools are linked to private businesses. The dropout rate at Central High was reduced by 8 percent after Federal Express employees began counseling students there. At Mitchell High School the Exxon Corporation sent personnel employees to coach students for job interviews.

- The Clorox Company in Oakland, California, helped 70 Castlemont High School tenth graders improve their reading. The company paid salaries for two aides who helped two reading specialists teach special classes. The company also paid for instructional materials, field trips, library books, and

incentive awards (such as \$10 gift certificates from record shops). Castlemont officials reported that during the program's first year, the average student improved 22 months in reading ability as measured by the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test.

- Chicago Superintendent Ruth Love began an "Adopt-a-School" program when she was superintendent in Oakland, California. She has started a similar program in 132 of Chicago's 600 schools.

- Houston public schools have borrowed techniques from the business world, including incentives for students and teachers. Students who earn all As or have perfect attendance win a free day at the city's AstroWorld amusement park. Teachers with perfect attendance may sell back five days of sick leave at \$100 a day. Teacher absences have declined, thus reducing the cost of hiring substitute teachers.

- Kiwanis Club members and other adults in Fort Worth are trained to serve as "special friends" for high-risk primary

children—those who are too shy to participate in class, who are aggressive and unable to control impulses and emotions, or who are coping with problems such as parental death, illness, divorce, or separation. The special friends are caring adults who give one-to-one attention to these children once or twice a week on the playground or in an empty classroom or the library. During part of each session the adult helps the child define problems, choose alternatives, and think through consequences.

Washington, D. C. successes

Floretta Dukes McKenzie, Superintendent of Schools in Washington, D. C., has enlisted the substantial help of several hundred businesses.

Career training programs under corporate sponsorship are offered at five city high schools. General Motors Corporation, IBM, and the Potomac Electric Power Company sponsor an engineering program. Control Data Corporation sponsors a program on information technology. The District of Columbia Bankers' Association and the National Savings and Trust Bank sponsor a program in business and finance. George Washington University sponsors a health science program, and the Capital Hilton Hotel and the Washington Hotel Association sponsor a hotel management and culinary arts program. All programs stress reading, writing, math, technology, work habits, and attitude.

McKenzie explains corporate willingness to work with public schools: "We drew up proposals that offered mutual gains. We convinced businesses that our schools are a worthwhile investment, one that pays off in human capital."

She told companies that they would not have to spend so much of their financial resources on recruiting and employee training (especially at the entry level) if the schools could provide graduates who were adequately trained.

Although District of Columbia schools have received gifts ranging from \$10,000 to \$500,000, financial contributions are last on a list of six ways businesses are asked to participate. The first five are to help design curriculum, provide liaison to other businesses, offer job opportunities for students or recent graduates, lend technical help, and provide classroom instruction.

The District's schools receive other kinds of corporate help. IBM and the John Henry Martin Corporation are conducting a national validation study of an approach to teaching reading and writing to kindergarten and first-grade children using a state-of-the-art computer laboratory; a General Motors management-training expert has conducted a team-building workshop for key personnel; and Digital Equipment Corporation has designed a three-day training course in computer technology for top administrators.

Business Initiatives

Sometimes it is the business community that takes the initiative in setting up programs:

- During the 1983 summer vacation, 210 minority high school students participated in a national Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) program funded by 75 corporate sponsors. The program was formed to offer minority students role models from their ethnic groups to demonstrate that they do have opportunities in American business. Students selected for the 1983 program took part in four-week courses, field trips, and case studies at one of seven universities.

- A National Business Consortium for the Gifted and Talented was formed in 1980. The consortium's goal is to improve education for gifted children and to monitor their curriculum; it has outlined an ambitious program to involve committees of business leaders in all the states. The group's efforts have been endorsed by 348 U.S. Representatives and 88 Senators.

Techniques you can use

Many more alliances will be formed this year between schools and their neighboring businesses and industries. Among the techniques that elementary principals will use are these:

1. Inviting parents and their employers to help the school assess its needs and locate available community resources;
2. Asking businesses to help strengthen students' math and communications skills and the ability to think, reason, and solve problems;
3. Requesting help in recognizing excellence by honoring students, teachers, and administrators;
4. Inviting business and industry leaders to help enhance the curriculum in their various areas of expertise—through minicourses and other devices;
5. Arranging for field trips to give older students a chance to observe employees in various occupations and gain firsthand knowledge of career options;
6. Inviting businesses to train students and school staff in new educational technologies, and to contribute or lend hardware and software;
7. Asking local businesses to give released time to employees so they can become school volunteers for an hour or two each week, offering enrichment, extra reinforcement in skill areas, and one-to-one support for children who need it;
8. Encouraging businesses to share such services as printing the school newsletter, providing materials, or

maintaining equipment; and

9. Developing opportunities to retrain teachers to increase the supply of qualified math and science teachers.

Needed: A clear and optimistic outlook

Although the various recent studies of American schooling contain criticism, their theme in every case has been constructive—to help.

That is specifically true of the report of the Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, whose membership included 14 of the nation's most prominent businesspeople. The task force concluded its report on an optimistic note, stating that "in spite of the problems facing our economy and our educational system, we in the United States can do what is necessary to improve public education across the country."

By that kind of message in support of public education, leaders of American business and industry have demonstrated their willingness to lend our elementary and middle schools a hand.

A key for principals to remember is that businesspeople need a clear plan of how they can work with a particular school. Once they have a firm idea of ways to help, many businesses are ready and eager to become involved.

Here's How is issued as a service to members. Copies may be purchased from the National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091. One copy \$.50; 2-9 copies \$.45; each; 10 or more copies \$.40 each. PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY ORDER.